



State Senator Sheila Harsdorf

March 11, 2008

**To: Members of the Senate Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs,
Biotechnology, and Financial Institutions**
From: State Senator Sheila Harsdorf
Re: Testimony on 2007 Senate Resolution 28

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Senate Resolution 28. While I will support and vote in favor of SR 28, I feel compelled to express my disappointment that the Wisconsin Legislature turned its back on an opportunity to require divestment from the central Sudan government and its foreign investors that have helped perpetuate the ongoing genocide in Darfur. Legal and fiscal issues were addressed and excuses dealing with precedent are inherently flawed. Certainly, there is no moral ambiguity with genocide.

Meanwhile the foreign companies that we profit from continue to perpetuate a systematic campaign of rape, murder, and pillaging in Darfur. While our investment board's own rules state they should only "seek investments in organizations which respect basic human rights" these rules have clearly been ignored and the Legislature has failed to act.

The nation's leading Sudan experts, including those at the International Crisis Group and the Council on Foreign Relations and writers with the Heritage Foundation, have supported targeted divestment as an important tool in the collective efforts needed to stop this genocide. Liberal and conservatives have joined together through a nationally-led divestment effort and the collaborative action of multiple states has shown that divesting can make a difference in stopping the genocide. President Bush and the U.S. Congress have led on this issue by authorizing divestment.

Today's resolution, while more about symbolism than substance, will at least allow the national movement to claim a bit of accomplishment here so they can take their divestment campaign beyond the 24 states that have already divested. It requires no sacrifice, no cost, and is the simple thing to do. Hopefully, because it is so simple, we can actually pass it.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
FREDERICK P. KESSLER

WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY

12TH DISTRICT

March 11, 2008

Senate Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs,
Biotechnology, and Financial Institutions.

Senate Resolution 28
Representative Fred Kessler

Chairman Sullivan, and members of the Senate Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs, Biotechnology, and Financial Institutions, thank you for holding a public hearing on Senate Resolution 28.

There are times in our history that demand action. During these times when circumstances require, it is our moral duty to get involved. Yet as officials estimate the total dead so far at more than 400,000 as a result of the violent genocide perpetrated by the Sudanese Government against its own citizens in the Darfur region, America and the international community have failed to take effective measures to end this tragedy.

If our country and the global community of nations are unwilling to act decisively on this matter, we as a state must do everything in our power to take action. While clearly the State of Wisconsin cannot act militarily to engage in an active peacekeeping role in the country of Sudan, we can follow the leadership of the twenty two states that have already adopted divestment policies. Divestment from companies that do business with the Sudanese Government will send the message that we will not stand by and allow this genocide to continue.

Thank you, I urge this committee to pass this important resolution.



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE RESOLUTION 28

Presented by John Huebscher, Executive Director

March 11, 2008

On behalf of the Wisconsin Catholic Conference, I urge you to support Senate Resolution 28.

Our Catholic advocacy is grounded in a number of bedrock principles. Two of these are the sanctity and dignity of human life, which reflect our conviction that every life is important and the principle of solidarity which reflects our conviction that life is social and that we are connected to each other.

The principle of human life and dignity calls us to assess our personal choices and policy preferences in light of their impact on all human beings. The principle of solidarity reminds us that we are one human family and therefore, as Pope John Paul II put it, "that all are truly responsible for all."

We live out the principles of human life, dignity and solidarity when we give of our resources and ourselves to people we can't see. That is why we care about unborn children and the terminally ill. That's why we ask people in rural areas to fund educational opportunities for the urban poor in Milwaukee. It is why we ask people in Milwaukee to help pay for farms to market roads in rural areas. The principles of human life and solidarity are why we ask our neighbors to care about all human life, whether in the womb, in the lab, or in the world.

And the principles of human life, dignity, and solidarity are why we all should care about what is happening in the Darfur region of Sudan. For when we stand idle or silent while the strong destroy the weak, we not only deny these bedrock principles, but we make it easier for others to do so.

On the other hand, every time we uphold human life, dignity, and solidarity, our actions not only help the afflicted, but they also inspire others to do the same. The more we affirm that certain practices won't be tolerated, the more we hasten the day when they won't happen at all.

Now it is true that the federal government is responsible for making foreign policy. Decisions about military action or economic aid to Darfur rest with Congress and the President. It is also true that in terms of humanitarian aid, non-government organizations are already doing a great deal. Catholic Relief Services, for example, has extended its presence in the Darfur region and provides desperately needed food and other basic assistance. CRS has long managed the largest agricultural development program in Sudan.

But Wisconsin also can make a difference. We can, by our state investment policy, show the world that we value human life and dignity more than fiscal benefits. We can witness our disgust at the economic forces that enable and abet the genocide taking place in that afflicted corner of our world.

We often hear that politics is the art of the possible. What this resolution asks is not only possible it is necessary for the preservation of human life, dignity, and solidarity. Thank you.

March 10, 2008

On behalf of the Milwaukee Jewish Council for Community Relations, representing twenty-nine constituent member organizations, we would strongly urge that the Senate Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs, Biotechnology, and Financial Institutions to pass SR28; encouraging the State Board of Investment to exclude companies in their portfolios doing business with Sudan. More than twenty states have already passed Sudan divestment legislation. This resolution, in support of a divestment strategy, would move Wisconsin in that direction.

• **Joel Pittelman**
President
• **Paula Simon**
Executive Director

Organizational Members

- American Association of Jews from the Former Soviet Union
- American Jewish Committee
- Americans for Peace Now
- Beth El Ner Tamid Synagogue
- B'nai B'rith International
- Congregation Arshai Lebowitz
- Congregation Arshe Shad/Kehillat Tzrah
- Congregation Beth Israel
- Congregation Beth Jehudah
- Congregation Emanu-El B'nei Jeshurun
- Congregation Emanu-El of Waukesha
- Congregation Shalom
- Congregation Shir Hadash
- Congregation Sinai
- The Generation After
- Hadassah
- Harry and Rose Samson Family Jewish Community Center of Milwaukee
- Hillel Foundation-Milwaukee
- Jewish Family Services
- Jewish War Veterans
- Lake Park Synagogue
- NAKAMAT USA
- National Council of Jewish Women
- New American Club
- ORT AMERICA, Inc.
- Temple Menorah
- Wisconsin Council of Rabbis
- Wisconsin Society for Jewish Learning
- Zionist Organization of America

As Jews, our collective memory of persecution and genocide evokes deep empathy for the victimized people of Darfur, and keen recognition of our responsibility—as Jews, as Americans, as people of conscience—to aid them. Bitter history has taught us that indifference must never be the response to genocide.

Since the Holocaust, the Jewish community's attitude toward preventing genocide has been summed up in the moral philosophy of "Never Again." Over time, however, the words have come to encompass a broader commitment, among Jews and non-Jews, that genocide not be tolerated in any place at any time. Because the Jewish people experienced genocide firsthand and were abandoned by the international community in their time of greatest need, Jews bear a particular responsibility to ensure that genocide be prevented.

Despite all of the local, national and international activism, the situation continues to deteriorate. It is incumbent upon all of us who care to use all of the tools available to us to end the genocide. Targeted divestment is one such tool. It can have maximal impact on Sudanese government behavior and minimal impact on innocent Sudanese and the financial health of institutional portfolios.

With bi-partisan support for this effort in the Wisconsin legislature, it is imperative that this committee vote to move this resolution forward immediately, prior to the end of the current legislative session. Wisconsin must be on the list of states taking action to address the genocide. Divestment continues to keep Darfur in the public eye and sends a clear message to both the Federal government and the international community that the crisis warrants attention.


PRESIDENT


EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*Safeguarding rights
and pursuing social justice
since 1938.*





SUDAN DIVESTMENT

TASK FORCE

A project of the Genocide Intervention Network

1333 H Street NW, Washington, DC 20005

PHONE (202) 481-8220
FAX (800) 991-2024
E-MAIL info@SudanDivestment.org
WEB SITE www.SudanDivestment.org

Written Testimony on Senate Resolution 28

To: Chairman Sullivan and Members of the Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs, Biotechnology, and Financial Institutions.

From: Scott Wisor, Sudan Divestment Task Force, a project of the Genocide Intervention Network

The Sudan Divestment Task Force, a project of the Genocide Intervention Network, is the coordinating entity for the global Sudan divestment movement. To date over 55 universities have adopted targeted Sudan divestment policies and 24 US states have adopted Sudan divestment policies, with a further 20 currently considering Sudan divestment policies. Internationally, over a dozen countries have active Sudan divestment campaigns.

While we generally advocate Sudan divestment mandates, it is our belief that Senate Resolution 28 is crucial to express the will of the Wisconsin legislature that the State of Wisconsin Investment Board should adopt a targeted divestment policy, and that to adopt such a policy would be well within their existing framework of fiduciary duty.

Companies operating in the oil, power, mining, and defense sectors of Sudan are subject to a variety of material risks that are a threat to shareholder value, and ultimately the retirement savings of the hard working people of Wisconsin. Companies are subject to operational risks, political instability, existing and pending sanctions regimes, and a global divestment campaign.

Targeted companies are severely underperforming their peers. An analysis of targeted companies operating in Sudan shows that over the last year Sudan-linked companies have underperformed their peers by 54.75% and by 20.06% over three years. Investing in companies subsidizing the Darfur genocide is a bad investment.

Furthermore, the recently passed Sudan Accountability and Divestment Act, signed by President Bush on December 31, 2007, gives explicit authorization and legal protection to the State of Wisconsin Investment Board to adopt a targeted divestment policy.

The employees and retirees of the State of Wisconsin do not want their retirement funds complicit in the genocide in Darfur. Please vote yes on Senate Resolution 28.